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# EDUCATION WEEK

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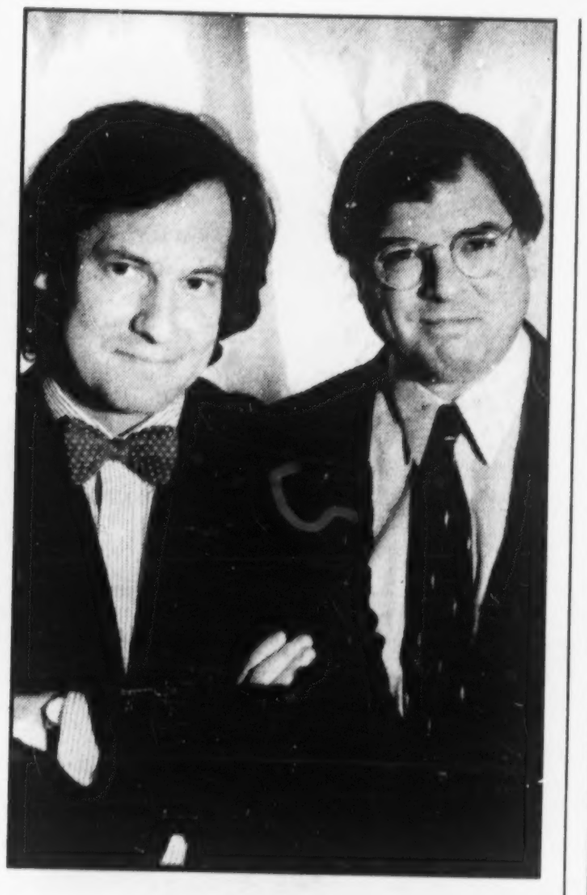

Benno C. Schmidt Jr., right, is leaving Yale University to head the Edison Project, started by Chris Whittle, left, to develop a system of private schools.

## Bus Safety at Issue for Preschoolers and Disabled

**By Peter Schmidt**

Worried that they are placing preschoolers and disabled students in danger by transporting them on buses without proper restraints, transportation and school officials are moving to develop safety guidelines.

The problem, school-bus manufacturers, transportation officials, and safety experts say, is that tens of thousands of preschool-aged youngsters and disabled students across the nation are being ferried on buses designed for older and nondisabled children.

In addition, they say, most regulations governing the use of school buses were not developed with preschoolers or disabled passengers in mind.

The problem is becoming increasingly evident, officials note, as growing numbers of infants, toddlers, and disabled children are being transported by school districts, Head Start programs, and other youth-serving agencies.

"Socially, we are ahead of where we are safety-wise," said Philip Bors, an injury-prevention specialist for the state of Florida who described his state as being "in limbo" as it seeks guidance on the transportation of preschoolers and special-needs students.

"Clearly, all of the research has been with regular kids sitting on a bench seat," said Cheryl A. Huff, the Florida Department of

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Mark Harrison

David Morgan, a bus driver for the Issaquah, Wash., schools, helps Tiffany Williams, a preschooler at Discovery Elementary School, out of a child-restraint seat.

## Yale President's Move Is Touted as a 'Coup' For the Edison Project

**By Mark Walsh**

The Edison Project, Whittle Communications' plan to develop a nationwide for-profit system of innovative private schools, gained new impetus last week with the surprise announcement that Benno C. Schmidt Jr., the president of Yale University, would leave his post to lead the effort.

By hiring an educator who has been at the helm of one of the nation's pre-eminent universities for the past six years, Whittle has heightened the credibility and visibility of its fledgling project, observers said.

"People take things quite seriously when the president of Yale resigns to do something," said Theodore R. Sizer, a professor of education at Brown University and the head of the Coalition of Essential Schools. "That is quite a coup."

"Surely it is a plus for the project," said P. Michael Timpane, the president of Teachers College, Columbia University. "The appointment of the president of Yale University has to have that effect."

"But it brings questions with it as well," he added.

Some educators and business leaders have doubts about the economics of Whittle's plan.

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## *Pioneering Board Faces Challenges In Setting Standards for Teachers*

**By Ann Bradley**

The most ambitious national effort undertaken so far to raise the status and quality of the teaching force is struggling to surmount a number of difficulties that are complicating its work.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is setting standards for excellence in teaching and plans to spend $50 million developing a voluntary national-certification system.

But some draft standards documents, board officials acknowledge, have fallen short of fulfilling the board's pledge to capture fully the complex nature of expert teaching.

Some of the standards committees also have taken longer than anticipated to issue their reports. The delays mean that the related teacher assessments are being created without a finished set of standards from which to draw.

At the same time, the national board is coming under pressure to open its standards-setting process more fully to teachers' professional organizations.

And questions over control of that process have cropped up between some of the teacher-majority standards committees and N.B.P.T.S. staff members.

Board officials say the problems are a natural outgrowth of the daunting task of creating the unprecedented certification process and will be resolved.

"This is complex," James A. Kelly, the president of the board, emphasized, "and not everything will work according to plan."

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## Students Read Little In or Out of School, NAEP Survey Finds

**By Robert Rothman**

WASHINGTON—In what President Bush called "troubling statistics," the National Assessment of Educational Progress last week reported that U.S. students do very little reading in or out of school.

In a report issued here, based on a 1990 survey of 25,000 students, NAEP found that 45 percent of 4th graders, 63 percent of 8th graders, and 59 percent of 12th graders read 10 pages or fewer per day for school. And, it found, the students reported less daily reading than students did in 1988.

Outside school, the study found, nearly a third of 8th and 12th graders said they never read for fun, and 22 percent of the high-school seniors said they do not have homework assigned or do not do it.

The NAEP study also showed that there is a wide gap between research findings on effective reading instruction and the practices of most classrooms.

Perhaps as a result, the study also showed that most students have difficulty going beyond a general understanding of a written passage to discuss and explain what they have read.

"We talk a big story about reform," said Alan E. Farstrup, the executive director of the International Reading Association. "But I am reminded of the Hans Christian Andersen story, 'The Emperor's New Clothes.' "

"We have all these test results, but we don't spend nearly enough on how to improve instruction," he said.

President Bush, speaking at the Mount Paran Christian School in Marietta, Ga., the day before the report was formally released, said its findings show that the nation has "a long way to go" to improve stu-

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## *Taxed to the Limit*

### School-Finance Complaints Spur Secession Drive

**By Lonnie Harp**

HUGOTON, KAN.—As Gladys Renfro points out highlights in the sprawling historical museum she manages here, it becomes obvious that the lore of this and other towns in southwestern Kansas is largely a tale of survival.

Even episodes like the contract killing of a rival town leader on the steps of a church—the retelling makes Ms. Renfro shudder—testify to the rugged local spirit.

Hugoton and its neighbors in this remote region of the Great Plains have been enveloped by dust storms, tested by floods, and pelted with meteorites. Yet it is only now that residents are confronting what they see as their greatest adversary: the state of Kansas.

Enraged by a school-finance-reform law passed by the legislature this spring, people here in Stevens County and eight other rural counties have launched a grassroots campaign to secede from Kansas to form their own state, or possibly even a new nation.

The finance law, passed in the expectation that the state courts would soon

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## Also in the news


**5** **A Price on Their Heads**
"Bounty hunters" and high-tech police work are the latest weapons in the war to catch illegally enrolled students.

## IN SUMMARY

**New Schools on Hold**
The New American Schools Development Corporation has postponed selecting the winners of its design competition to reinvent American schools until July 7. **Page 5.**

**Schools and Gangs in L.A.**
Improving the public schools is "by far the most significant" long-term strategy Los Angeles County can employ to combat gang activity, a study by the county district attorney's office concludes. **Page 8.**

**A Balancing Act**
The Milwaukee school system would more evenly distribute its resources among schools, and less evenly distribute its black teachers, under a plan proposed by its superintendent. **Page 8.**

**Disabled Sue Chicago**
A federal class action charges that Chicago's public schools are unnecessarily and illegally segregating students with disabilities. **Page 8.**

**Naming Names**
Several eminent scientists and education reformers are among those named to the panels that will develop national standards for K-12 science curriculum, teaching, and assessment. **Page 10.**

**California Scheming**
California educators are bracing for an intense fight as lawmakers turn their attention to the state's projected budget shortfall, which is thought to be more than $11 billion. **Page 19.**

**Schoolwide Chapter 1**
Some school districts coping with shrinking budgets may have to end schoolwide Chapter 1 projects because they cannot meet strict rules that funding for such schools be maintained year to year. **Page 23.**


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# ACROSS THE NATION

## NATIONAL

### Survey Suggests Most U.S. Teens Find Violence, Weapons in Schools

More than three-quarters of American teenagers believe that threats of violence against students are a problem in their schools, according to a survey commissioned by Camp Fire Boys and Girls.

Of the 546 students nationally who responded to the written survey, released last month, 78 percent said threats of violence are a problem, and more than 53 percent believe their schools have problems with students carrying weapons.

Twenty percent of the 13- to-19-year-olds reported witnessing confrontations in school involving a knife; 7 percent said they had seen an encounter involving a gun.

Most teenagers—83 percent of those surveyed—said they had seen students engaged in fistfights in school, and 55 percent had seen students destroying school property.

Ninety percent of the respondents said drugs were the primary reason for teenage violence, followed by abuse by parents (83 percent) and gang involvement (80 percent.)

Nonwhite students (87 percent) and those who lived in large cities (85 percent) were more likely than whites (77 percent) and those living in communities of under 100,000 people (74 percent) to attribute violence to gang-related activity, the survey found.

Seven out of 10 teenagers surveyed said that their schools had a problem with students selling drugs. Nonwhite teenagers were twice as likely as white ones to say that drug sales by students were a major problem in their schools.

■ **Schools that are not part of the national asbestos class action and who have claims against the National Gypsum Company are required to file damage claims by July 1.**

A federal bankruptcy court in Dallas, which is overseeing the company's bankruptcy filing, recently ruled that school districts and any other entities that may have property-damage claims against National Gypsum must file a proof-of-claim form by this summer. Copies of the form are available by writing the company, 501 Cedar Springs Rd., Suite 700, Dallas, Tex., 75201-1433.

About 1,500 of the nation's 36,000 public and private schools have opted out of the national class action, which was filed in federal court in 1983 and has not yet gone to trial. ■

## STATES

### Ariz. Open Enrollment Continues To Grow, State Report Finds

Nearly 6 percent of Arizona's public-school students take advantage of locally adopted open-enrollment policies, with the majority choosing to attend schools within the same district, according to a recent survey.

The Arizona Department of Education's research office surveyed 169 districts statewide, representing 95 percent of the state's 683,648 K-12 students, to gauge the impact of local school-choice policies.

During the current school year, the survey showed, 10,115 students attend a school in a different district, slightly more than the 9,833 who were doing so in the most recent previous survey, conducted in 1989.

The new study also indicates that 29,971 students are enrolled in a school other than the one they normally would have attended within the same district.

The survey notes that four districts under desegregation orders or agreements account for 36 percent of the intradistrict transfers, while two counties account for 90 percent of the interdistrict transfers.

The state legislature currently is debating a statewide open-enrollment measure.

■ **The State of California could save $10 billion if it enacted a private-school voucher plan that gave students an education "credit card,"** according to a report by the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Foundation.

The savings would result from closing unpopular public schools after giving students a credit that would pay up to $2,500 annually in private-school tuition based on financial need, the report says. Alvin Rabushka, a Hoover Institute economist who wrote the report, said such a move could cut personal income taxes in half.

Proponents of such a measure in the state are working to place an initiative on the November ballot.

The report, "Reversing California's Decline," also calls for dramatic changes in the tuition scale for the state's higher-education system, cuts in welfare benefits, and other measures aimed at slashing state spending. ■

## DISTRICTS

### Quincy, Mass., District Defies Court And Approves Graduation Prayers

The Quincy, Mass., school committee has voted to allow prayers at the graduation ceremonies this month of its two high schools, defying a ruling against such prayers by the federal appellate court whose jurisdiction includes Massachusetts.

The school committee voted 6 to 1 on May 13 to allow the prayers at graduation ceremonies of Quincy and North Quincy high schools. The committee voted 7 to 0 to allow such prayers at its junior college's commencement.

Last year, the Quincy committee voted to suspend allowing graduation prayers after the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit ruled in a Rhode Island case that graduation prayer at public schools violates the U.S. Constitution's ban against government establishment of religion. The First Circuit court's rulings are binding in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Puerto Rico.

## *Science Super Heroes*

Mindful of the popularity of trading cards of baseball players, television characters, and comic-book heroes, an enterprising science institution in Oregon is hoping to use the craze to interest youngsters in careers in science.

The Oregon Graduate Institute of Science & Technology, near Portland, has issued a unique series of trading cards featuring the school's science professors.

A total of 12 cards in sets of three have been printed so far. Each card features a photo of a professor along with vital statistics, including his or her specialty, sources of research funding, and, yes, the professor's hobbies.

"It convinces people that science is a profession that semi-normal people go into," says James Hurst, a chemistry professor whose card features his pet Labrador retriever Winston, who is the campus mascot.

Originally created as a marketing ploy for the school, the cards are gaining an audience nationwide. Fellow professors, high-school teachers, parents, and students as young as age 9 have asked for the cards, which are not sold at the local five-and-dime. The series will continue next year, with a new lineup of organic chemists and electrical engineers.

But then, as now, bubblegum and thermonuclear fission devices will not be included with the cards.

Free cards may be obtained by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope with $0.87 in postage to Bob Applegate, Office of Public Affairs, Oregon Graduate Institute of Science & Technology, 19600 Northwest Von Neumann Dr., Beaverton, Ore. 97006-1999. —S.K.G.

# Playing For Healing

Rosemary Kaul/Los Angeles Times

**The student orchestra of Rosemont Avenue Elementary School in Los Angeles performs at the reopening of a department store damaged during the riots following the verdict in the Rodney King case. Students from the school created art work symbolizing their hope for healing in the community to decorate the store.**

Three Quincy school-committee members who voted to suspend the prayers last year are no longer on the panel.

The Quincy board's action symbolizes the ongoing discord over the graduation-prayer issue. The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in the Rhode Island prayer case last November, and the Justices could issue their ruling any time before early July.

■ **A stalemate over busing contracts that left 7,500 handicapped preschoolers in New York City without transportation to class for three weeks ended last week in a compromise between the state and the city's board of education.**

The impasse began April 30, when contracts for private bus companies expired, leaving thousands of children who have mental, physical, or emotional handicaps with no transportation to the city's 138 special-education programs. Before bus service resumed in late May, attendance at special preschool programs was down approximately 80 percent, school officials said.

State legislators refused to allow the contract to be renewed, charging that the city had ignored a 1986 state law requiring them to allocate contracts on a competitive basis. The city has paid for busing service without state funds since 1989 at a cost of $42 million a year.

The deadlock ended last week when both houses of the state legislature passed a bill exempting the city from compliance with the competitive-bidding law retroactive to 1989 and through April 1995. Under the bill, the city also gains $25 million and a 50 percent state reimbursement for transportation of handicapped children through June 30, 1995, whether or not the city chooses to put the contracts out for bid. The bill is expected to be signed by Gov. Mario M. Cuomo.

■ **More than a dozen Beloit, Wis., girls who were sexually assaulted by a male student at school have sued the school district and the city of Beloit, claiming negligence,** according to the girls' lawyer.

The suit on behalf of the 14 girls, who are all about 14 years old, was filed last month in Rock County Circuit Court, according to the lawyer, who did not want to be named.

However, a lawyer for the school district said last week that he believed the suit had not yet been served on the district.

The male assailant, who was 14 at the time of the incidents, was found delinquent on 23 juvenile counts, including second-degree sexual assault, battery, and disorderly conduct, said Ann Sitrick, a district spokesman.

He was ordered to serve two years in the Ethan Allen Home for Boys, the girls lawyer said.

The incidents occurred between January 1990 and April 1991 at McNeel Junior High School and Morgan Elementary School in Beloit, Ms. Sitrick said.

Earlier this year, a federal judge dismissed another civil action brought by the girls seeking $4.8 million in damages, their lawyer said. Each had asked for $300,000 in compensatory damages, and their parents had asked for an undetermined amount of compensation for any necessary physical or psychological treatment for their daughters, the lawyer said.

That civil-rights suit alleged the district "had not taken appropriate action to prevent sexual assault," Ms. Sitrick said.

■ **All AIDS-education materials used in New York City's public schools must place a greater emphasis on abstinence than on condoms,** the board of education voted last week.

At issue was a popular 1987 video, "AIDS: Just Say No," featuring the actress Rae Dawn Chong, and a pamphlet distributed by the city's health department. The resolution, passed on a 4-to-3 vote, bans these frank materials from use in the classroom.

According to the resolution, all outside organizations and individuals taking part in the district's AIDS-education program must sign a statement saying they will provide only materials and lessons that state that abstinence is the most effective means of avoiding the virus that causes AIDS.

More time must be devoted to abstinence than protected sex, the resolution says.

■ **School officials in Dallas are weighing changes in their procedures for conducting background checks of employees in the wake of a newspaper investigation showing that 85 current district employees have criminal records, one of them for murder.**

*The Dallas Morning News* conducted the investigation by comparing Dallas County criminal records against the names of the district's 16,000 employees.

The newspaper found that the 85 employees, who are classified workers and a few teachers' aides, were convicted felons or were on probation for committing a felony.

Of those who were convicted felons, charges ranged from aggravated assault to the falsification of food-stamp applications to drug offenses. One custodian who had worked for the district for three days had been indicted on a murder charge.

Robby Collins, the district's director of government and internal relations, said that officials are considering the immediate firing of 47 of the employees who had either lied on their applications regarding previous convictions or who had committed a felony while employed by the district. Those employees who are on probation, which expunges any criminal record, will be reviewed "on a case-by-case basis," he said.

The district is considering semi-annual checks of school employees, using statewide criminal records, a procedure that must first be considered by the school board later this month.

A 1989 state law requiring criminal-records checks of teacher applicants did not cover the employees uncovered by the investigation. ■

**DIMENSIONS**

## Parental Involvement

Nearly one-quarter of American high-school students believe that parents in their neighborhoods rarely are involved in preparing their children for school and schoolwork, a national survey concludes.

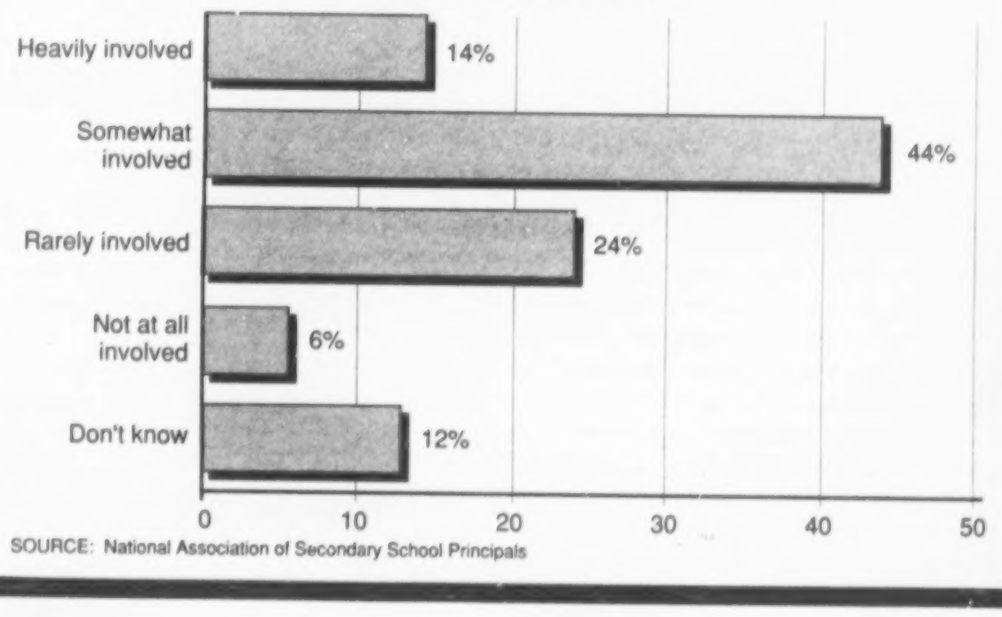
The survey, released last month by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and Sylvan Learning Centers, found that only 14 percent of those polled said local parents were heavily involved in their children's education. Forty-four percent said parents were somewhat involved, and 6 percent said they were not at all involved. Twelve percent had no response.

The survey is based on the responses of 1,365 11th and 12th graders from 20 high schools nationwide.

Student also rated the importance of various steps parents might take to help their children be more successful in school. They most strongly supported actions outside of school itself—such as helping with homework, setting study rules, and assisting with study resources—rather than such in-school activities as volunteer work, parent-teacher-association involvement, and regular meetings with teachers and counselors.

Copies of the survey, "Voices From the Classroom," are available for $3 each by calling Sylvan Learning Centers at (800) 627-4276.

**High-School Students' Views of How Involved Parents Are in Schools**




SOURCE: National Association of Secondary School Principals

**UPDATE**

■ **The State of Maryland has been accepted as a member of an international organization of government agencies concerned with school construction,** Gov. William Donald Schaefer announced last week.

Maryland becomes the first U.S. state to join the Programme on Educational Building, a Paris-based organization that promotes the international exchange of ideas related to school construction and design. *(See Education Week, April 1, 1992.)*

Although the P.E.B. is operated within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, an intergovernmental group of free-market democracies that includes the United States, it had until last winter limited its membership to national governments. The U.S. government, which has little involvement in school construction, had declined to join.

■ **A junior-high-school girl in Hamilton, Ohio, who gave Tylenol to a classmate was ordered by the school district to attend detention on two consecutive Saturdays.**

The district's decision last month to require Dana Merry to attend Saturday school came after a Butler County Common Pleas Court judge ruled that an earlier decision by the district to suspend her for five days must be revoked and removed from her record. *(See Education Week, March 11, 1992.)*

In his decision, Judge John Moser said the district had imposed the suspension under the wrong section of its discipline code. He said such a suspension would have been permissible under the district's medication policy, which allows only school officials to administer drugs with parental permission. ■

**PEOPLE**

■ The Mississippi Board of Education has chosen **Tom Burnham** as the state's new superintendent of education.

Mr. Burhnam, 46, has been superintendent of the Biloxi, Miss., schools for the past four years.

He succeeds Richard Thompson in the $90,000-a-year post. Mr. Thompson resigned in April to head a state teacher-training center in North Carolina.

Mr. Burnham will assume his new duties July 1. ■

**MILESTONES**

■ **Sidney P. Marland Jr.,** who served as the top U.S. education official in the Nixon Administration, died last week at his home in Hampton, Conn. He was 77.

As the U.S. Commissioner of Education from 1970 to 1972, and then as the first statutory assistant secretary of education in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, from 1972 to 1973, Mr. Marland helped develop and implement landmark education programs, including the National Institute of Education and Basic Educational Opportunity Grants, now known as Pell Grants.

He also helped establish career education, one of his major interests, as a high federal priority.

Following his tenure in Washington, Mr. Marland served as the president of the College Board from 1973 to 1978, during which, among other tasks, he created a commission to investigate the steep decline in Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. ■